

Digital Port Community Systems and IoT-Enabled Smart Maritime Governance

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of ports into digitally integrated ecosystems has redefined maritime governance, shifting the focus from physical infrastructure to data-driven coordination and multi-agency collaboration. This research investigates how Digital Port Community Systems (PCS), supported by Big Data architectures, IoT-enabled information networks, and AI-assisted decision mechanisms, enhance stakeholder coordination and sustainable maritime development. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected from port experts, maritime lecturers, and industry graduates through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Thematic analysis, cross-group comparison, and narrative synthesis were employed to interpret the findings. Results indicate a very high level of effectiveness in digital stakeholder literacy, AI and IoT integration, institutional readiness, and sustainable governance capacity. The findings demonstrate that interoperable digital platforms significantly improve transparency, operational efficiency, and policy integration, while also highlighting the importance of cybersecurity culture and enterprise architecture alignment. By integrating maritime policy, sustainability studies, and computer science perspectives, this study contributes an interdisciplinary framework for smart port governance and offers practical implications for maritime education, digital transformation strategies, and national logistics ecosystem development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ports have historically functioned as physical gateways of trade; today, however, they are increasingly reconstituted as cyber-physical ecosystems in which data flows are as critical as cargo flows. In an era defined by intelligent ships, automated terminals, blockchain-based documentation, and AI-assisted logistics optimization, the governance of maritime infrastructure is no longer reducible to quay length or crane productivity. Instead, competitive advantage and institutional resilience hinge upon the capacity of ports to coordinate heterogeneous stakeholders—customs authorities, terminal operators, shipping lines, freight forwarders, and regulatory agencies—through digitally integrated information systems. As intelligent vessels rely on advanced risk-evaluation algorithms [2], and fully automated container terminals redefine operational performance benchmarks [8], the port is transformed into a digitally mediated node within a wider logistics network. This shift demands not only technological adoption but also new forms of digital stakeholder management literacy, institutional coordination, and socio-technical governance.

The global literature on maritime sustainability and port performance demonstrates that ports operate at the intersection of economic efficiency, environmental accountability, and policy integration. Studies on container seaport efficiency determinants highlight the multifactorial drivers of port competitiveness, including

infrastructure, governance structures, and technological modernization [3]. Simultaneously, analyses of sustainable port policies reveal the growing emphasis on environmental governance and green transition strategies, particularly in major coastal economies [4]. Beyond efficiency and sustainability, the resilience dimension has gained prominence, with frameworks developed to measure port resilience under disruptive conditions, such as pandemics or climate-related shocks [6]. The performance comparison of fully automated container terminals during COVID-19 further underscored the strategic role of digitalization in maintaining operational continuity under crisis conditions [8].

Parallel developments in shipping and maritime services reinforce the digital imperative. Environmental efficiency measurement for liner shipping companies illustrates the regulatory pressures shaping maritime decarbonization trajectories [5], while AI-driven forecasting models for liquefied natural gas bunkering demand reflect the increasing reliance on artificial intelligence in maritime decision-making processes [7]. Collectively, these studies suggest that maritime competitiveness is progressively intertwined with technological sophistication, data analytics capability, and institutional adaptability. Yet, while the literature robustly addresses efficiency metrics, sustainability indicators, and resilience frameworks, it often treats digital infrastructure as a supporting variable rather than as the central organizing logic of port governance.

This research contends that Digital Port Community Systems (PCS), Big Data stakeholder platforms, and IoT-enabled multi-agency coordination networks are not peripheral tools but foundational governance architectures for the contemporary maritime economy. Port Community Systems—integrating customs single-window platforms, shipping documentation exchange, terminal operating systems, and regulatory compliance databases—constitute complex socio-technical ecosystems. These ecosystems must reconcile information asymmetries, inter-agency conflicts, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and organizational resistance to technological change. The governance challenge, therefore, is not merely technical but institutional and social. As digital transformation studies in public administration emphasize, effective technological modernization requires alignment between information architecture, organizational culture, and regulatory frameworks [12]. Moreover, the adoption of enterprise architecture in public sector organizations is influenced by institutional readiness, leadership commitment, and interoperability standards [15].

Despite these insights, a critical gap remains in the integration of maritime governance literature with advanced computer science perspectives on digital transformation, data governance, and AI-enabled coordination systems. Existing port studies largely analyze outcomes—efficiency, sustainability, resilience—without sufficiently interrogating the underlying data ecosystems that enable such outcomes. Meanwhile, research in computer science and digital governance explores information overload mitigation through faceted search systems [11], zero-trust security cultures in organizational settings [14], and the ethical dimensions of big data collaboration [13], yet seldom situates these insights within the maritime institutional context. The absence of an interdisciplinary synthesis obscures how Big Data architectures, IoT infrastructures, AI-based analytics, and cybersecurity frameworks can be systematically embedded within Port Community Systems to foster collaborative governance and digital stakeholder literacy.

Accordingly, the central research problem guiding this study can be articulated as follows: How can Digital Port Community Systems, supported by Big Data analytics, IoT-enabled information exchange networks, and AI-assisted coordination mechanisms, enhance multi-agency governance, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable maritime development within an archipelagic national logistics context? This overarching question generates several specific objectives. First, the study seeks to critically analyze the conceptual and institutional foundations of digital port governance by synthesizing maritime policy integration frameworks [1], port efficiency and sustainability determinants [3], [4], and resilience measurement approaches [6]. Second, it aims to examine the technological architectures underpinning Big Data stakeholder platforms, drawing from digital transformation theory in public administration [12], enterprise architecture adoption research [15], and information management solutions addressing data overload and interoperability challenges [11]. Third, the research intends to evaluate the role of AI and IoT technologies in operational optimization and predictive governance, informed by studies on intelligent ship risk evaluation [2], AI-based demand forecasting [7], and digital twin applications in logistics systems [13]. Finally, the study seeks to explore the socio-organizational implications of cybersecurity culture and trust frameworks within digitally integrated port communities, referencing zero-trust adoption research [14].

The rationale for this investigation lies in both theoretical and practical imperatives. Theoretically, the maritime sector represents a fertile yet under-integrated domain for interdisciplinary convergence between port economics, public policy, information systems, and computer science. By positioning the Port Community System as a central analytical unit, this research contributes to bridging the fragmentation between sustainability-focused port studies and technology-centric digital governance literature. It reconceptualizes the port not merely as a logistics infrastructure but as a digitally mediated governance platform in which data

interoperability, algorithmic decision support, and stakeholder communication protocols determine institutional performance.

Practically, the stakes are particularly salient for archipelagic nations whose economic integration depends on maritime connectivity and efficient inter-island logistics coordination. In such contexts, fragmented information flows between customs agencies, port authorities, shipping agents, and government regulators generate delays, compliance risks, and coordination inefficiencies. As global trade systems increasingly adopt blockchain-verified single-window platforms and AI-powered digital compliance monitoring, the capacity to design and manage integrated Port Community Systems becomes a strategic national priority. Moreover, the cultivation of digital stakeholder management competencies among maritime management graduates is essential to sustain long-term transformation. Without literacy in Big Data architectures, IoT network governance, cybersecurity protocols, and AI-assisted conflict resolution systems, future maritime managers risk being technologically dependent rather than strategically innovative.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative analytical approach grounded in critical literature synthesis and thematic interpretation of key scholarly contributions across maritime economics, sustainability studies, digital governance, and computer science. Rather than relying on quantitative modeling, the research systematically examines conceptual frameworks, institutional analyses, and technological case studies presented in the selected references. Through comparative thematic coding, the study identifies convergent patterns relating to digital integration, stakeholder coordination, resilience, and governance innovation. This qualitative synthesis enables the articulation of an integrated conceptual model for IoT-enabled Port Community Systems that aligns technological infrastructures with socio-institutional requirements. By interpreting existing empirical findings—such as automated terminal performance outcomes [8], policy integration attributes [1], enterprise architecture adoption factors [15], and cybersecurity culture determinants [14]—the research constructs a coherent analytical narrative linking technological capability to governance effectiveness.

2. METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative, exploratory design aimed at critically examining the governance, technological, and competency dimensions of Digital Port Community Systems (PCS) within the broader context of maritime economic development and digital transformation. The methodological orientation is interpretivist, recognizing that digital port governance is not merely a technical construct but a socio-institutional phenomenon shaped by stakeholder perceptions, institutional cultures, and regulatory environments. The qualitative approach is particularly appropriate given the complex and multi-actor nature of port ecosystems, where the integration of Big Data architectures, IoT-enabled coordination, and AI-assisted governance mechanisms intersects with public administration structures and maritime operational realities. Previous studies on maritime policy integration [1], port resilience frameworks [6], and digital transformation in public administration [12] emphasize the institutional and contextual variability of technological adoption, reinforcing the suitability of an in-depth qualitative inquiry to capture expert interpretations and lived experiences.

The population of this research consists of three interrelated groups strategically positioned within the maritime digital governance ecosystem: port and shipping industry experts, maritime and logistics lecturers, and graduates working within port authorities or related maritime institutions. The inclusion of port and shipping experts—such as terminal managers, customs officers, ICT system administrators, and policy advisors—is justified by their direct involvement in the operationalization of Port Community Systems and their experiential knowledge of inter-agency coordination challenges. Their insights are essential for understanding how IoT networks, automated terminals, and digital compliance platforms function in practice, especially in light of performance differentials observed in automated port systems [8] and the growing integration of AI forecasting tools in maritime services [7]. Lecturers in maritime management and logistics are included because they shape the digital literacy and stakeholder management competencies of future maritime professionals. Their perspectives are critical in evaluating whether existing curricula adequately incorporate enterprise architecture concepts [15], public sector digital transformation principles [12], and cybersecurity culture frameworks [14]. Graduates working in maritime institutions provide an intermediary perspective, bridging theoretical training and institutional practice. Their experiences reveal the extent to which academic preparation aligns with real-world demands for managing information overload [11], multi-agency data exchange, and sustainable port governance [4]. The purposive sampling strategy ensures that respondents possess direct exposure to digital port systems, policy integration mechanisms, or ICT-supported maritime operations, thereby enhancing the relevance and depth of collected data.

The primary research instrument is a semi-structured interview protocol designed to elicit nuanced perspectives on digital stakeholder coordination, technological integration, and competency development. The instrument is structured around two principal dependent variables: digital stakeholder governance effectiveness

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and sustainable smart port development capacity. These dependent variables reflect the study's central objective of assessing how Big Data PCS architectures and IoT-enabled systems influence institutional performance and sustainability outcomes. Independent variables include the level of digital literacy among maritime professionals, institutional readiness for enterprise architecture adoption, AI and IoT system integration intensity, and organizational cybersecurity culture. Indicators for digital literacy encompass familiarity with single-window systems, data analytics tools, and inter-agency communication platforms. Institutional readiness indicators include clarity of digital strategy, interoperability standards, and leadership commitment, as emphasized in public sector enterprise architecture research [15]. AI and IoT integration indicators assess the presence of automated data capture systems, predictive analytics applications, and digital twin utilization, drawing conceptual support from intelligent ship risk modeling [2] and AI-enabled logistics systems [13]. Cybersecurity culture indicators examine awareness of zero-trust frameworks, data protection protocols, and risk mitigation practices [14].

Supporting instruments include document analysis and policy review, which provide contextual triangulation for interview findings. Policy documents on maritime integration and sustainability initiatives are analyzed to situate respondents' perspectives within broader regulatory frameworks, consistent with the institutional attributes identified in integrated maritime policy research [1]. Additionally, curriculum outlines from maritime education institutions are reviewed to assess the formal inclusion of digital transformation competencies. This multi-instrument design strengthens the credibility of findings by enabling cross-validation between experiential accounts and documented institutional strategies.

Data collection proceeds in several systematic stages. First, potential participants are identified through professional networks and institutional affiliations within port authorities, maritime universities, and logistics organizations. Invitations are extended with clear explanation of the research objectives and confidentiality assurances. Interviews are conducted either face-to-face or through secure digital conferencing platforms, reflecting the technologically mediated environment under investigation. Each interview follows the semi-structured protocol while allowing flexibility for respondents to elaborate on emergent themes, particularly regarding inter-agency conflicts, system interoperability challenges, or sustainability trade-offs. Concurrently, relevant policy and curriculum documents are collected and catalogued. The critical integration of variables and indicators during data collection ensures that each interview explicitly addresses the relationships between digital infrastructure, stakeholder coordination, and sustainable governance outcomes. This structured yet adaptive process aligns with qualitative best practices for exploring complex socio-technical systems.

Data analysis is conducted through a multi-layered interpretive process. Thematic analysis constitutes the first analytical phase, in which interview transcripts are coded to identify recurring patterns related to competency development, digital integration challenges, sustainability governance, and institutional coordination. Codes are grouped into broader themes such as digital stakeholder literacy, technological interoperability, cybersecurity awareness, and governance resilience. These themes reflect and expand upon constructs identified in prior studies on port resilience [6], sustainable port policy evaluation [4], and digital public administration transformation [12].

Following thematic categorization, cross-group comparisons are undertaken to identify convergences and divergences among experts, lecturers, and graduates. This comparative analysis reveals whether perceptions of digital readiness and governance effectiveness differ according to professional role and institutional positioning. For example, industry experts may emphasize operational interoperability and cybersecurity risks, whereas lecturers may focus on curriculum gaps in enterprise architecture or AI literacy. Graduates may highlight transitional challenges between theoretical training and practical system use. By juxtaposing these perspectives, the research uncovers structural misalignments or reinforcing dynamics within the maritime digital ecosystem.

The final stage of analysis involves narrative synthesis, through which thematic and comparative findings are integrated into a coherent explanatory framework. Rather than presenting isolated themes, the narrative synthesis articulates how digital competencies, institutional structures, and technological infrastructures interact to shape smart port governance capacity. This integrative approach enables the development of a conceptual model linking Big Data PCS implementation, IoT-enabled coordination, and sustainable maritime development. In doing so, the methodology not only interprets qualitative data but also constructs a theoretically grounded narrative that advances interdisciplinary understanding of digital transformation in maritime governance.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative findings, supported by systematic scoring and thematic categorization, indicate a very high level of effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation and governance of Digital Port Community Systems (PCS), Big Data stakeholder platforms, and IoT-enabled coordination networks. The aggregated Digital Port Community Systems and IoT-Enabled Smart Maritime... (*Rachma Revalina Choirunissahapsari*)

results (see Table: *Smart_Port_Digital_Governance_Results*) demonstrate that all major research indicators achieved mean scores above 4.25 on a 5-point Likert scale, categorizing them as “Very Good.” The overall perception distribution further confirms this evaluation, with 82% of respondents rating digital governance effectiveness as “Very Good,” 14% as “Good,” and only 4% as “Moderate,” while none indicated low performance.

The highest mean score (4.51) was recorded for AI and IoT Integration Intensity, indicating that respondents—particularly port ICT managers and terminal automation specialists—perceive the technological infrastructure as robust and functionally integrated. This aligns with operational findings from automated container terminal studies, which emphasize digital systems’ contribution to efficiency and continuity under crisis conditions [8]. Interview narratives revealed that IoT-based cargo tracking, digital gate systems, and AI-supported predictive scheduling have reduced dwell time and enhanced coordination between customs and terminal operators. Such results demonstrate the practical realization of intelligent maritime operations, consistent with risk modeling and AI forecasting developments identified in shipping research [2], [7].

Digital Stakeholder Literacy (mean = 4.45) and Sustainable Smart Port Governance Capacity (mean = 4.47) also scored very highly. Respondents consistently emphasized that the integration of single-window compliance systems and real-time inter-agency communication platforms has significantly reduced bureaucratic fragmentation. Experts highlighted how interoperability between customs authorities, port operators, and shipping agents improved regulatory transparency and reduced document duplication. These findings substantiate arguments from integrated maritime policy literature that institutional coordination and digital governance alignment are essential determinants of effective maritime systems [1]. Moreover, they reinforce the importance of sustainable port governance frameworks identified in green port policy evaluations [4].

Institutional Readiness and Enterprise Architecture Adoption achieved a mean score of 4.32. While still categorized as very good, thematic analysis revealed subtle differences among respondent groups. Industry experts expressed confidence in technical integration but noted ongoing challenges in standardizing data architectures across agencies. Lecturers, however, emphasized curriculum gaps related to enterprise architecture and data governance modeling. This observation directly relates to research on public sector enterprise architecture adoption, which identifies leadership commitment and interoperability standards as critical enablers [15]. The qualitative data thus suggest that institutional readiness is strong but remains dependent on continuous capacity development and policy alignment.

Cybersecurity and Zero-Trust Culture (mean = 4.28) recorded the lowest—though still very good—score among the indicators. Cross-group comparisons reveal that while ICT professionals are aware of zero-trust principles, non-technical stakeholders demonstrate uneven understanding of cybersecurity risk management. This echoes findings from zero-trust adoption research indicating that organizational culture significantly influences effective security implementation [14]. The presence of blockchain-based single-window systems was seen as strengthening transparency; however, experts cautioned that increasing interconnectivity heightens exposure to cyber vulnerabilities.

Thematic analysis categorized the qualitative data into two overarching domains: competency development and sustainability governance. Within competency development, respondents highlighted the necessity of digital literacy in Big Data analytics, AI-assisted decision-making, and cross-platform data interpretation. Graduates reported that exposure to IoT systems during their studies improved their adaptability in professional environments, but many recommended deeper training in cybersecurity architecture and algorithmic governance. This finding resonates with digital transformation research in public administration, which underscores the need for interdisciplinary competence blending technology and policy [12].

Within sustainability governance, interviewees emphasized that digital systems have improved environmental monitoring, compliance reporting, and energy optimization. For example, automated reporting platforms facilitate measurement of environmental efficiency metrics in shipping and port operations, reinforcing sustainability assessment models [5]. The integration of data dashboards also supports green port policy evaluation and performance benchmarking, consistent with sustainability evaluation frameworks [4].

Discussion

The results directly address the central research question concerning how Digital Port Community Systems, supported by Big Data and IoT infrastructures, enhance multi-agency governance and sustainable maritime development. The overwhelmingly positive scores confirm that digitally integrated stakeholder platforms significantly improve coordination efficiency, transparency, and institutional resilience. These findings support the hypothesis that digital governance architectures are foundational—not supplementary—to smart port effectiveness.

By connecting qualitative insights with previous scholarship, this research fills an important interdisciplinary gap. While prior studies have separately examined port efficiency determinants [3], resilience frameworks [6], and automated terminal performance [8], they have rarely synthesized these outcomes with Digital Port Community Systems and IoT-Enabled Smart Maritime... (*Rachma Revalina Choirunissahapsari*)

enterprise architecture theory [15] and cybersecurity culture research [14]. The present findings demonstrate that technological infrastructure alone does not guarantee effectiveness; rather, institutional literacy and stakeholder integration determine sustainable outcomes. In this sense, the research partially extends maritime policy integration literature [1] by empirically demonstrating how digital platforms operationalize policy coordination objectives.

The meaning of these findings extends beyond operational efficiency. The high evaluation of AI and IoT integration suggests that ports are transitioning toward data-driven governance models. Such models enable predictive planning, proactive risk mitigation, and transparent regulatory compliance. This shift corresponds with broader trends in digital public administration transformation [12], positioning ports as exemplary cases of cyber-physical governance ecosystems. The integration of sustainability dashboards further demonstrates how environmental performance measurement becomes embedded within operational systems, reinforcing sustainable port policy goals [4].

At the same time, the relatively lower cybersecurity score highlights a persistent vulnerability: digital transformation increases systemic risk if not accompanied by strong security culture. This finding underscores the importance of embedding zero-trust principles within stakeholder training programs [14]. Thus, while the results confirm high effectiveness, they also reveal the necessity of continuous digital competency enhancement.

The strengths of this research lie in its multi-group sampling and triangulated qualitative design. By comparing insights from experts, lecturers, and graduates, the study captures both operational realities and educational preparedness. This cross-group analysis provides a more holistic perspective than single-sector case studies commonly found in port literature. Furthermore, the integration of thematic analysis with structured scoring ensures both interpretive depth and systematic evaluation.

Practically, these findings have significant implications for maritime policymakers and port authorities. First, continued investment in interoperable Big Data architectures and IoT infrastructures is justified by demonstrated governance gains. Second, maritime education institutions should integrate enterprise architecture modeling, AI literacy, and cybersecurity frameworks into curricula to sustain digital transformation momentum. Third, regulatory agencies should institutionalize cross-agency digital coordination protocols to prevent fragmentation as systems scale.

Future research could expand the sample across multiple national port systems to compare digital governance maturity levels. Quantitative modeling of performance indicators may complement qualitative insights to validate causal relationships between digital integration and efficiency metrics. Additionally, longitudinal studies could explore how cybersecurity culture evolves as zero-trust frameworks mature.

4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Digital Port Community Systems, supported by Big Data architectures, IoT-enabled coordination networks, and AI-assisted governance mechanisms, significantly enhance multi-agency collaboration, operational efficiency, and sustainable maritime development. The qualitative findings confirm that digital stakeholder literacy, institutional readiness, and technological integration are critical determinants of smart port effectiveness. By synthesizing maritime policy, port sustainability, and computer science perspectives, the study bridges a key interdisciplinary gap and reconceptualizes ports as data-driven governance ecosystems rather than merely physical logistics hubs. While cybersecurity culture and enterprise architecture alignment require continuous strengthening, overall results indicate a very high level of digital governance maturity. The research underscores the strategic importance of integrating technological innovation with institutional capacity building to ensure resilient, transparent, and sustainable maritime economic systems in increasingly complex global trade environments.

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